

Introduction to Cultural Studies
HU 46-1100 | Spring 2009
www.lizmarks.net/intro/

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Office Hours: Mondays 10am-12pm, or by appointment

Course description:

This course presents students with an overview of the methods and strategies used in cultural studies, and lays the foundation for more advanced studies in the field. We will take an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing how culture acts on individuals in a society, how it is produced and where it is located, and how it engenders consensus. We will also explore the meaning of the term 'culture' and seek to understand how culture is mediated in different contexts and geographical spaces.

We will seek culture in television, film, and online sources, and use the course reading to challenge our assumptions the function of culture. We will attempt to understand what culture means in terms of globalism, i.e. is there such thing as a global or transnational culture? What is American culture? We will also examine how culture relates to power and raise the question of who controls culture, if anyone.

Pre-Requisites:

This course has no prerequisites.

Credit:

Introduction to Cultural Studies can be used either for the LAS Core OR for the Cultural Studies major. It cannot be used for both.

Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) Core Curriculum Credit:

This course bears Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) credit for Humanities. By taking this course you will complete three (3) of the required "Culture, Values, and Ethics" credits needed to graduate from Columbia College. By taking a Humanities course, students will be exposed to the basic ethical questions that have confronted human kind as well as various methods and approaches to these questions. In addition, the course will assist you in achieving the following LAS Core Objectives:

- Read for both comprehension and pleasure
- Write as both a communicative and an expressive practice
- Conduct research and as part of that process learn to measure, evaluate, and assess
- Reflect on and appreciate human endeavor across cultures and eras
- Consider and examine, historically and comparatively, human behavior, ethical issues, and social institutions
- Reason scientifically and understand scientific methods
- Understand and use basic mathematical concepts and skills
- Utilize various tools of analysis to enable critical thinking
- Express themselves orally in a clear and effective manner

Cultural Studies credit: This is the introductory course for the Cultural Studies major and it is required for the completion of the major.

Email:

I will use your college email account to correspond with you, so please check it, and use it to write to me. You should be firstname.lastname@loop.colum.edu, so if you haven't set up that account yet, please do so: <http://www.colum.edu/students/>. Please do not use your personal email account.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities are requested to present their Columbia accommodation letters to their instructor at the beginning of the semester so that accommodations can be arranged in a timely manner by the College, the department or the faculty member, as appropriate. Students with disabilities who do not have accommodation letters should visit the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (312-369-8134/V or 312-369-0767/TTY): 33 East Congress Parkway, first floor, in the rear of the Writing Center. It is incumbent upon the student to know his/her responsibilities in this regard.

Required Texts:

- John Berger. Ways of Seeing. Penguin Books, 1972. ISBN: 0140135154
- Jeffrey Nealon & Susan Searls Giroux. The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences. Rowman and Littlefield, 2003. ISBN: 0742519945
- Susan Sontag. Regarding the Pain of Others. FSG, 2003. ISBN: 0312422199

and ONE of the following books:

- Marjane Satrapi. Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood. Pantheon Books, 2004. ISBN: 037571457X
- Alison Bechdel. Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic. 2004. Pantheon Books. ISBN: 0618871713
- Craig Thompson. Blankets. 2003. Top Shelf Comics. ISBN: 1891830430

There is one copy of each of these on reserve in the school library. Library may have additional copies.

Additional reading will be posted on library e-reserve as PDFs.

Additional References (Optional):

- Anderson, Elijah. 1992. *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community*. University Of Chicago Press.
- Barker, Chris. 2008. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. 3rd ed. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Bennett, Tony, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris. 2005. *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Revised. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Berger, John. 2003. *Selected Essays of John Berger*. Vintage.

- Duncombe, Stephen. 2002. *Cultural Resistance Reader*. Verso.
- Duneier, Mitchell. 2000. *Sidewalk*. 1st ed. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, December 20.
- During, Simon. 1999. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Routledge.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2008. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. Reprint. Holt Paperbacks.
- Elbow, Peter. 1998. *Writing without Teachers*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Featherstone, Simon. 2005. *Postcolonial Cultures*. University Press of Mississippi.
- Fiske, John. 1989. *Understanding Popular Culture*. 1st ed. Routledge.
- Fox, Aaron A. 2004. *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*. Duke University Press.
- Holt, Douglas. 2000. *The Consumer Society Reader*. New Press.
- Jackson, John L. 2005. *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*. University Of Chicago Press.
- Lasn, Kalle. 2000. *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge-- And Why We Must*. Harper Paperbacks.
- Lull, James. 2000. *Culture in the Communication Age*. Routledge.
- Lutz, Catherine A. 2002. *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century*. 1st ed. Beacon Press.
- Maxwell, Richard. 2001. *Culture Works: The Political Economy of Culture*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Newman, Katherine S. 2000. *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. Vintage.
- Postman, Neil. 1993. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. Vintage.
- ---. 2005. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. 20th ed. Penguin.
- Satrapi, Marjane. 2005. *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*. Pantheon.
- Schlosser, Eric. 2005. *Fast Food Nation*. Harper Perennial.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 1996. *A Space on the Side of the Road*. Princeton University Press, February 16.
- Watson, James. 2006. *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia, Second Edition*. 2nd ed. Stanford University Press.

Requirements:

Oral Presentation: (10 mins) A signup sheet will be handed out on the first day for presentations on the reading. Due to class size/number of classes 2-3 people will wind up signing up for a given week. You are encouraged to divide up the reading amongst your “team”, but giving a joint presentation on the entire reading assignment is fine too. It’s okay if you don’t understand everything. If you find yourself with questions, present them to the class as a topic for discussion. You can be as creative and use as much multimedia as you’d like in your presentation- the projector and ‘teaching station’ are yours!

Fieldwork Paper: a 4-5 page analytical paper in which you use your powers of observation to interrogate an environment. A list of places to choose from will be handed out during class, or if you have a particular space in mind please propose it to me (nothing on the CTA is eligible). Your paper will analyze how the space you choose is constructed, who it is

trying to appeal to, what is it trying to make visitors think/feel? Who comes here? How are they interacting with the space?

Cultural Analysis Paper: This is a 5-7 page paper, double-spaced. It will be about any element of **contemporary** culture you wish! It should be research oriented (i.e. cite sources), but also involve your own analyses and observations on the topic. As we read in this class, pay attention to how cultural studies analyses are performed, as you'll need to apply these techniques to your own chosen topic. Examples include the artwork of Jeff Koons, street racing culture, the 2008 Olympics, "mash-ups", or vegetarian restaurants in Chicago. As long as it's **contemporary**, it's fair game.

Extra Credit:

Although we may also go during class time, if you go to an exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Photography (600 S. Michigan, 1st Floor) on your own time and document it, you will receive extra credit. Also, going to the writing center and getting them to proofread either of your papers will count for extra credit.

Grading System:

Cultural Analysis Paper	30%
Fieldwork paper	30%
Oral Presentation:	20%
General Class Participation	20%
Course Grade:	100%

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Based on the following criteria:

- (+/-) Attendance! A good group discussion requires your presence.
- (+) Contributing to class discussion. This is a seminar, and not a lecture class, which means that learning occurs through conversation rather than direction. Contributing includes asking questions and displaying clear evidence of having done the reading. At the beginning of class I will ask if anyone has any topics relating to the reading that s/he would like to make sure we address. Coming with a question, something that you noticed about the reading (a comment, a printout of a news story related to class, a relevant website you found, all of this will boost your CP grade. (This is the initial 'Open Forum' part of class.)
- (+) Appearing alert during class time, actively engaging your classmates, and not sleeping or otherwise indulging in distracting and distracted activities.
- (+) Taking notes. Your notes will be of use to you when you write papers
- (+) Bringing the books and/or printouts of the week's reading to class.
- (-) Excessive cellphone ringing. Please set your phone to vibrate or turn it off during class time. It is inappropriate to take a call during class, except during our break time. Everyone has cellphone 'oops' moments, so don't worry about getting deducted unless this becomes an ongoing problem. Please also refrain from text messaging during class time.
- (-) Using your laptop to surf the web during class time. I recommend turning the wireless connection off so you won't be tempted, or not taking notes on a laptop if the temptation will prove too great.

ATTENDANCE:

Your attendance is very much appreciated and is essential to the course. This is a seminar, not a lecture course, and your participation in our group discussion is an important part of the learning process for everyone.

Because we only meet once each week you will be dropped a full letter grade **after your second absence**. **TWO** late arrivals or **TWO** early departures count as one absence, so please be careful about those and save them for when you're sick or have an important appointment. Hopefully neither will happen during class time!

You are responsible for viewing any films you miss, and for catching up on any other in-class activities and notes. See "Late Work Policy" for details on late assignments.

PAPERS:

Papers must be typed and double-spaced, with a font no larger than 12 pts, and margins no wider than 1.25 inches. Please type your full name, the class, and the day/time we meet somewhere on the paper.

If you email a paper, please save the file with your name contained in the title. An ideal file name would be "Emarks.doc" or "ElizabethMarks.doc, for example. Please only send .doc or .pdf files.

If you need writing help, don't hesitate to consult the **Columbia College's Writing Center** (33 E. Congress)- see our class website for link. I can also look at a draft of your paper during office hours or over email.

LATE WORK POLICY:

My policy on accepting late work is simple- I don't accept it unless you ask for an extension before the due date. If an emergency causes you to miss a deadline, I will ask you to provide documentation of the emergency in some way. If you do plan ahead and ask for an extension, you'll find me very generous with them.

Schedule:

The schedule is subject to change, however students will be notified of any changes. For the most current schedule, particularly if you miss a class, please check the course website (lizmarks.net/intro/)

The reading listed for each week is the reading you should have completed before coming to class on that week. Articles marked "PDF" will be available for download from the Library e-reserve.

*E-reserve URL: <http://ereserves.lib.colum.edu/eres/>

Look under "Marks" in the Instructor section. Password is 461100

WEEK 1 (Jan 27, 28)

Introduction, What is Cultural Studies? What is culture? Challenging the culture concept.

Examination of relevant quotes, defining 'culture' as a group, and reading of "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." By H. Miner (handout)

WEEK 2 (Feb 3, 4)

Theory and Authority; Reading, Semiotics
(Finding and producing meaning)

Reading for this week: The Theory Toolbox, Chapters 1-3 (pgs 1-34)

Screening of scene from the film "Žižek!" (1995) Does access to the author tell us anything useful about his work?

WEEK 3 (Feb 10, 11)

Subjectivity and the self : mediation and compromise

Reading for this week:

- The Theory Toolbox, Chapter 4 (pgs 35-50)
- Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (online; linked from class site).

Screening: "Affluenza" (1997; PBS) - excerpts

Optional: S. Kracauer "Boredom" from The Mass Ornament (PDF)

WEEK 4 (Feb 17,18)

Cultural revolution and resistance: a case study

Reading for this week: Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood, Blankets, or Fun Home (whichever you chose)

I encourage you to seek out the animated film, as well as the sequel to this week's reading: Persepolis II (see Additional Resources).

WEEK 5 (Feb 24, 25)

Authenticity and aura, presence and experience.

Reading for this week:

- Ways of Seeing Chapter 1 (7-34) AND
- Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" Second Version from Selected Writings, Volume 2 (PDF)

WEEK 6 (March 3, 4)
Gender Issues, The power of looking

Reading for this week:

- Ways of Seeing Chapter 2-3 (35-64) and
- “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” by Laura Mulvey from Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology ed. Philip Rosen (1986) (PDF)

We may see excerpts from the TV version of WoS if time permits

WEEK 7 (March 10, 11)
Identity, representation, and the media

Reading for this week:

- The Theory Toolbox, Chapters 5 (pgs 51-78) and 10
- Neil Postman’s Amusing Ourselves to Death Chapter 10 “Teaching as an Amusing Activity” (PDF)

Screening: “Stuart Hall: Media, Race & Representation” (1997)

WEEK 8 (March 17, 18) – *Fieldwork Paper due*****

Reading for this week: The Theory Toolbox, Chapters 6 (pgs 83-94) and Ways of Seeing Chapters 4 and 5

WEEK 9 (March 24, 25) *Spring Break*

No class this week, but please read:

Reading for this week: Regarding the Pain of Others by Susan Sontag

WEEK 10 (March 31, April 1) – *Topic for Cultural Analysis Paper Due*****

History, nationhood and space

Reading for this week: The Theory Toolbox, Chapters 7 (pgs 95-108) and 8 (only 114-124)

WEEK 11 (April 7, 8)
Globalization, Transnationalism

Reading for this week: J. Watson “McDonald’s in Hong Kong.” from Golden Arches East (PDF)

WEEK 12 (April 14, 15)
Orientalism and post-colonialism

Reading for this week:

- The Theory Toolbox, Chapter 9 (only pgs 140-150) and excerpt from Edward Said's Orientalism (PDF)

WEEK 13 (April 21, 22) – *CA Paper Argument due *****
Agency

Reading for this week: The Theory Toolbox, Chapter 11

WEEK 14 (April 28, 29)
Introduction to Postmodernism!

Reading for this week:

- The Theory Toolbox, Chapter 9 (only pgs 125-131)
- “Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” by Frederic Jameson (excerpts linked from website)

*There are a lot of great relevant readings under the ‘Additional Resources’ section of this syllabus and the course website.

WEEK 15 (May 5, 6) – *Cultural Analysis Paper Due*****
Finals, no additional reading. Final paper due by Thursday, December 11th at 2:00pm.
Instructions will be given in class as to how to turn it in.